

Information Needs in Juvenile Dependency Court

Decisions made in juvenile dependency court¹ have far-reaching effects on the lives of children and families, but empirical information on the experience of children and families in the court is limited. Agencies other than the court—including education, mental health, probation, social services, and correctional agencies—collect data on children in the child welfare and juvenile dependency systems, but their data collection efforts are focused on their own reporting requirements and research needs. For its part, the juvenile court has generally focused its studies on court operations. As a result, the court lacks sufficient information on the effect of its own practices and decisions on the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children under its jurisdiction. This lack of information severely hampers the court's ability to manage its caseload, assess the effectiveness of services, advocate for resources, or provide information to the public.²

A national consensus on the need for information collection and performance measurement in juvenile dependency court is developing. Recent reports from the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care³ and from a consortium of the National Center for State Courts, the American Bar Association (ABA), and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges⁴ recommend detailed performance measures based on systematic data collection for dependency court. Research staff and others from the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC) prepared this article to assist those involved in defining performance measures and information collection standards for California's juvenile dependency court system. The article reviews the current efforts to define data standards for dependency court, examines the current sources of information available on children in the dependency system, and identifies the key research and performance issues in California that an information system for juvenile dependency must address.⁵

INFORMATION NEEDS IN CALIFORNIA'S JUVENILE DEPENDENCY COURT

There are no national guidelines on collecting data and calculating performance measures for the juvenile dependency court. While the data collection system for child welfare agencies is federally mandated and funded, individual juvenile dependency courts have developed data collection systems and outcome measures on the state or local level. The result is wide disparity in the capabilities of

DON WILL

ALEXA HIRST

ALISON NEUSTROM

Center for Families, Children & the Courts

The California juvenile dependency court often lacks basic information on the effect of its practices and decisions on the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children under its jurisdiction. Recent performance measures for juvenile dependency court developed by the American Bar Association, the National Center for State Courts, and the National Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges indicate growing consensus that dependency courts should collect and report data to assess their performance. This article reviews the current efforts to define data standards for dependency court, reviews the current sources of information available on children in dependency, and identifies the key research and performance issues in California that an information system for juvenile dependency must address.

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those systems and definitions of data elements. Recent AOC research projects⁶ indicate that the data collection systems used by many dependency courts

- do not measure the number of children under juvenile court jurisdiction;
- do not measure whether hearings take place within the mandated time frames;
- do not track the placements of children under the court's jurisdiction;
- do not provide data on whether court-based interventions, such as allocating more time to hearings, dependency mediation, or dependency drug court, have an impact on placement outcomes;
- do not provide data on measures related to the need for resources in the juvenile court, including how many children in the state transfer from the dependency system to the delinquency system, how many children under juvenile court jurisdiction have parents who are involved in other family or juvenile court cases or who are incarcerated, and how many children and parents require services in a language other than English; and
- do not use standardized measures for data collection, making it impossible to compare data among courts.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR JUVENILE DEPENDENCY COURTS: A DEVELOPING CONSENSUS

In 1990 the National Center for State Courts published its *Trial Court Performance Standards*, which give guidelines on 5 general and 68 specific performance measures for the courts.⁷ Few of these measures are specific to juvenile court. In 1995 the *Resource Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases* was published by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.⁸ This document, which has served as the basis for many initiatives to improve juvenile dependency court operations, includes a short statement on information collection:

Court staff should operate a computerized data system capable of spotting cases that have been seriously delayed, and capable of measuring court progress in case flow management. This information system should maintain statistics on the length of time from case filing to case closure. The system should also monitor the length of key steps in the litigations, such as petition to adjudication, petition to disposition, and termination of parental rights petitions to final written findings of fact and conclusions of law.⁹

In 1993 the federal Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS) program began developing national guidelines and providing funding to state child welfare agencies for case management and reporting.¹⁰ These guidelines currently reflect the measures on foster-care placement and other outcomes defined in the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)¹¹ and in the Child and Family Services Reviews.¹² The development of data collec-

tion standards and performance measures for dependency courts that are coordinated with the federal child welfare standards has proceeded since then. In 2004, the ABA, National Center for State Courts, and National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges released *Building a Better Court: Measuring and Improving Court Performance and Judicial Workload in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases*.¹³ This document proposes a range of performance measures that

are based on court operations and linked to the outcomes defined by ASFA (see below). Also in 2004, the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care recommended that dependency courts adopt those performance measures:

Every dependency court should adopt the court performance measures developed by the nation's leading legal associations and use this information to improve their oversight of children in foster care.¹⁴

COURT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Source: Reprinted by permission from CTR. ON CHILDREN & THE LAW, AM. BAR ASS'N ET AL., BUILDING A BETTER COURT: MEASURING AND IMPROVING COURT PERFORMANCE AND JUDICIAL WORKLOAD IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT CASES 9–11 (David & Lucile Packard Found. 2004).

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 1: SAFETY

Goal 1: Children should be safe from abuse and neglect while under court jurisdiction.

Safety Outcomes Are:

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- No child should be subject to maltreatment while in placement.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

What Courts Should Measure:

1. Percentage of children who do NOT have a subsequent petition of maltreatment filed in court after the initial petition is filed.
2. Percentage of children who are the subject of additional allegations of maltreatment within 12 months after the original petition was closed.

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 2: PERMANENCY

Goal 2: Children should have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Permanency Outcomes Are:

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

What Courts Need to Measure:

1. Percentage of children who reach legal permanency (by reunification, guardianship, adoption, planned permanent living arrangement, or other legal categories that correspond with ASFA) within 6, 12, 18, and 24 months from removal. Specific time lines for this measure should be adapted to jurisdictional time lines.
2. Percentage of children who do not achieve permanency in the foster care system (e.g., court jurisdiction ends because the child reaches the age of majority).
3. Percentage of children who re-enter foster care pursuant to court order within 12 and 24 months of being returned to their families.
4. Percentage of children who return to foster care pursuant to court order within 12 and 24 months of being adopted or placed with an individual or couple who are permanent guardians.
5. Percentage of children who are transferred among one, two, three, or more placements while under court jurisdiction. Where possible, this measure should distinguish placements in and out of a child's own home from multiple placements in a variety of environments.

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COURT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

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PERFORMANCE MEASURE 3: DUE PROCESS

Goal 3: To deal with cases impartially and thoroughly based on evidence brought before the court.

Due Process Outcomes Are:

- Enhancement of due process by deciding cases impartially and thoroughly, based on evidence brought before the court.

What Courts Need to Measure:

1. Percentage of cases in which both parents receive written service of process within the required time standards or where notice of hearing has been waived by parties.
2. Percentage of cases in which there is documentation that notice is given to parties in advance of the next hearing.
3. Percentage of cases in which the court reviews case plans within established time guidelines.
4. Percentage of children receiving legal counsel, guardians ad litem or CASA volunteers in advance of the preliminary protective hearing or equivalent (Percentage within established time guidelines? Percentage within 0–5 days? 6–10 days? More than 10 days?).
5. Percentage of cases where counsel for parents are appointed in advance of the preliminary protective hearing or equivalent (Percentage within established time guidelines? Percentage within 0–5 days? 6–10 days? More than 10 days?).
6. Percentage of cases in which legal counsel for children changes (as well as number of changes in counsel if possible).
7. Percentage of cases where legal counsel for parents changes (as well as number of changes in counsel if possible).
8. Percentage of cases where legal counsel for parents, children, and agencies are present at each hearing.
9. Percentage of children for whom all hearings are heard by one judicial officer (as well as two, three or more judicial officers if that information is available).

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 4: TIMELINESS

Goal 4: To enhance expedition to permanency by minimizing the time from the filing of the petition or protective custody order to permanency.

Timeliness Outcomes Are:

- Expedition of permanency by minimizing the time from the filing of the petition or protective custody order to permanency.

What Courts Need to Measure:

1. Average or median time from filing of the original petition to adjudication.
2. Average or median time from filing of the original petition to disposition.
3. Percentage of cases that are adjudicated within 30, 60, 90 days after the filing of the dependency petition.
4. Percentage of cases that receive a disposition within 10, 30, 60 days after the dependency adjudication.
5. Average or median time from filing of the original petition to permanent placement.
6. Average or median time from filing of the original petition to finalized termination of parental rights.
7. Percentage of cases for which the termination petition is filed within 3, 6, 12, 19 months after the dependency disposition.
8. Percentage of cases that receive a termination order within 30, 90, 120, 180 days after the filing of the termination petition.
9. Percentage of cases for which an adoption petition is filed within 1, 3, 6 months after the termination order.
10. Percentage of cases for which the adoption is finalized within 1, 3, 6, 12 months after the adoption petition.
11. Percentage of hearings (by hearing type) not completed within time frames set forth in statute or court rules. Where possible, the reason(s) for non-completion should also be captured (e.g., party requesting postponement).

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 5: WELL-BEING

[This measure has not yet been defined.]

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON CHILDREN IN DEPENDENCY

The children under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court are involved with many different agencies, which has led to the fragmentation of data and research in these systems. Based on reports to the AOC Judicial Branch Statistical Information System (JBSIS), the majority of courts collect information on petitions, hearing dates and outcomes, and other events, such as juvenile dependency mediation. The county child welfare agency maintains records and reports on the child's out-of-home placements and the progress of the child's case plan, while local school districts and mental health agencies collect specific information on the educational and mental health services provided to the child or parents. If the child has been in delinquency court, the county probation department or the California Youth Authority maintain key information on the child.

DATA COLLECTION IN THE COURTS

Local courts in California maintain individual case management systems for dependency cases, but the information kept by the systems varies widely and is often not comparable across courts.

At the statewide level, JBSIS provides the courts a framework for data collection and reporting on dependency. Courts report aggregate statistics to JBSIS on measures related to the juvenile court. The measures include, for a given time period, counts of dependency filings and dispositions; numbers of children under the courts' supervision; the length of cases in broad categories of 18 months, three years, five years, and more than five years; and counts, by hearing type, of hearings, mediations, and settlement conferences. JBSIS can collect information on some of the dependency hearing timelines: whether review hearings did or did not take place within 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months, and whether termination-of-reunification-services hearings did or did not take place within 12 months.

All the data elements in JBSIS are "snapshot," or point-in-time, statistics. The statistics are drawn

from individual court case management systems that vary widely in the depth of detail collected. All courts report total filings and dispositions to JBSIS. As of this writing, approximately three-quarters of courts are reporting some of the detailed measures listed above, primarily counts by hearing type, while fewer than 20 percent are reporting timeliness or other measures.¹⁵

Court Statistics Reports

Every year the AOC publishes the *Court Statistics Report*.¹⁶ Nationally, several organizations compile and reanalyze state-level data on case processing. The National Center for State Courts, the Conference of State Court Administrators, the State Justice Institute, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics participate in the Court Statistics Project, which has published several documents describing court case processing, including *State Court Caseload Statistics*¹⁷ and *Examining the Work of State Courts*.¹⁸ The statistics on dependency court reported in these publications are restricted to filings and dispositions.

CHILD WELFARE DATA

Governmental agencies at the federal and state levels are mandated to collect and compile state-level data on child abuse, neglect, foster care, and adoption rates.

Data Reported at the Federal Level

Federal legislation requires that state child welfare agencies comply with several guidelines, called the "SAC-WIS standards,"¹⁹ which specify comprehensive²⁰ data collection and compliance with the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS)²¹ and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).²² The requirements specify that agencies collect and report certain case-level data on a semiannual basis. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF) collects the data on child maltreatment for NCANDS and the data on foster care and adoption for AFCARS.

ACF publishes analyses of AFCARS data on its Web site. Its annual report, *Child Welfare Outcomes*,

is based on both AFCARS and NCANDS data.²³ The Children's Bureau also publishes these data in its annual report, *Child Maltreatment*,²⁴ and the Child Welfare League of America organizes and disseminates data (including data from NCANDS and AFCARS) through its National Data Analysis System.²⁵

Data Reported by the State of California

The California Department of Social Services administers the state's child welfare services and reports to AFCARS and NCANDS through its Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS).²⁶ The system, which has been fully operational since the end of 1997 and meets SACWIS standards, contains child-level data on the status, demographics, and placement history of all foster-care children in the state. Child welfare services in all 58 counties and the California Department of Social Services' Adoption Program district offices enter data into CWS/CMS.

State Child Welfare Data Accessible to the Courts and the Public

A partnership between the California Department of Social Services and the Center for Social Services Research (CSSR) at the University of California at Berkeley has made aggregate data from the CWS/CMS child welfare system accessible to the public and other agencies.²⁷ The Department of Social Services extracts quarterly data from CWS/CMS, and CSSR uses the data to create cohort²⁸ files and make data and research highlights available on a variety of topics, including child abuse referrals, placement indicators by foster-care cohort, adoption trends, caseload flow, and exits from foster care per year. CSSR also reports the Child and Family Service Review performance measures for each county and a revised version of these measures based on cohort files for counties.

The data reported on the CSSR Web site is the most comprehensive source of information for California juvenile courts on the children under their jurisdiction. While CSSR does not report specific court measures such as petition and hearing dates, it

does provide summaries in the form of detailed base-lines and trends on the children under dependency court jurisdiction. Trend tables of this data that are of most interest to the courts have been published by the CFCC in the California Juvenile Statistical Abstract²⁹ and made available to dependency court judicial officers and staff throughout the state.

The Department of Social Services releases its own aggregate quarterly reports of AFCARS data and statistics on foster care, adoptions, out-of-home care, and other programs.³⁰ These data are not longitudinal and do not explicitly include information about the court's role in child welfare.

Research Using Child Welfare Data

Services offered by child welfare agencies have been the subject of considerable research. The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago has explored child welfare issues and has developed a national agenda for child abuse and neglect prevention. Chapin Hall also maintains the Multi-state Foster Care Data Archive, which contains 11 years of foster-care case history data from California, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, and New York. In addition, Chapin Hall is tracking the histories of over one million children who were placed in state-funded out-of-home care. Chapin Hall publishes analyses of many of these data.³¹

The Urban Institute has published policy analyses of issues such as kinship-care policies,³² child welfare expenditures,³³ and the role of noncustodial fathers in child welfare case management.³⁴ The Annie E. Casey Foundation sponsors initiatives and research in the child welfare field, including self-evaluations of its *Family to Family* Foster Care Initiatives³⁵ and publishes *Kids Count*,³⁶ an annual compilation of child well-being indicators. One study from the Bay Area Social Services Consortium has explored the relationship between child welfare agencies and the courts.³⁷

Little is known about the long-term outcomes for children in the child welfare system, particularly those who age out of the system. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, in conjunction

with the National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect at Cornell University, is conducting the first nationally representative longitudinal study using data collected directly from parents, children, and social service personnel.³⁸ This study, the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being,³⁹ will follow for several years a group of children who enter the child welfare system to assess their behavioral and social status and to document the services their families need and are given. The Center for Social Services Research, using state child welfare data, has begun to track outcomes for emancipated foster children by linking some administrative data from other state agencies.⁴⁰

Other Data

Independent-Living Services Data. California child welfare agencies are mandated to provide independent living skills training to children 16 or older who will be aging out of the foster-care system.⁴¹ The U.S. General Accounting Office recently published an evaluation of independent living services across the country for which it surveyed 50 states and the District of Columbia about their independent living services and conducted a more in-depth analysis of programs in four states.⁴²

Mental Health Treatment Data. The California Department of Mental Health oversees publicly funded mental health treatment in the state and administers Medi-Cal (Medicaid) funding for mental health services.⁴³ In its Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System, the department tracks the number of children who are eligible for Medi-Cal mental health services because they are disabled, are in the foster-care system, or are recipients of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF). Data are also collected on children in the juvenile justice system who receive services in secure facilities. In addition, since 1998, the department has collected detailed data through the Children and Youth Performance Outcome Measurement System on children with serious, persistent mental illness who have received or will receive 60 or more days of publicly funded services. Courts can use the depart-

ment's published analyses⁴⁴ to track the proportion of children in foster care who are receiving mental health services and the average mental health expenditure per foster-care child.

Educational Services Data. In California, public school districts (including schools for children who are wards of the court) collect various student-level data. The districts then aggregate and report school-level performance indicators to the California Department of Education. In addition to standardized test results, all schools collect data on academic performance, staffing, expenditures, school enrollment, course enrollment, and dropout and graduation rates.⁴⁵ The department also collects detailed student-level data on children in special education programs through the California Special Education Management Information System.⁴⁶ The Department of Education publishes analyses of many of these data, and the RAND Corporation posts many of them on its Web site.⁴⁷ None of these education-related sources provides direct information on children in dependency.

DEFINING A DEPENDENCY INFORMATION SYSTEM IN CALIFORNIA

California's 1997 *Court Improvement Project Report* included this statewide recommendation for dependency courts:

Recommendation 18: F&J [Family and Juvenile Advisory Committee] improvement planning should include as a priority the development of data entry and reporting protocols for dependency actions. All juvenile courts statewide should be able to use automated information systems to collect and analyze standardized, basic information on the dependency caseload. The goal should be a system capable of timely, accurate, coordinated, and useful case identification, tracking, and scheduling. Such systems should ensure appropriate confidentiality of the case records and party identification.⁴⁸

Now that a consensus on national performance measures for juvenile dependency court is developing,

designing information systems and collecting standardized information in California are becoming more feasible. It is worth reviewing the advantages of consistently collecting data and reporting performance measures on every dependency court in the state.

- The performance measures and data required to produce them can provide standard measures, defined and collected in a standardized way by all courts, of cases and hearings in the state. At present no such measures exist, and resource allocations are not directly based on these basic components of court workload.
- Performance measures provide a benchmark to measure progress. Basic guidelines for dependency court were incorporated into the California Standards of Judicial Administration in 1997;⁴⁹ yet there is no system to measure courts' progress in meeting these guidelines.
- Performance measures give the dependency court ownership of its reporting and assessments. While statistical performance measures give a limited picture of a court's or program's effectiveness, making decisions on resources or technical assistance based on data designed and collected by the juvenile court for those purposes is preferable to making those decisions based on data collected for other purposes such as financial records, personnel data, general filings data, or data from other agencies.
- Performance measures alone cannot establish causal relationships between court action and the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in foster care. However, they can be used to assess the broad effects of court interventions and to identify areas where more-focused evaluations may be required.

The authors propose the following recommendations for implementing performance measures in dependency courts based on their research and interviews of court professionals:

1. More nationwide research on the implementation of performance measures and other standardized

data is needed. The performance measures proposed by the ABA and National Center for State Courts have not been systematically tested in the courts. The publications discussed in this article give very little guidance on how the proposed performance measures could be used by the courts and what modifications to the proposed measures might be necessary. Before implementing performance measures on a statewide basis, California dependency courts must pilot the measures and track the experiences of other courts around the country that are piloting the measures.⁵⁰

2. **The information collected by courts should be tied to standardized, statewide statistical reporting.** As courts implement performance measures, JBSIS will need to be revised. Statewide statistical reporting should provide information on a case and cohort level, rather than aggregate statistics for all children in the dependency system.⁵¹
3. **Courts should not duplicate the information collection of the local department of social services.** However, the courts must be able to link information at the child level to the placement information on the same child kept by the county department of social services. Overcoming the barriers to linking court and social services data is the key to the success of the effort to implement standardized information collection in the courts. Few court-based or AOC initiatives to link court and social services data for specific projects have resulted in agreements to share information.⁵²
4. **Courts need to carefully consider which measures should be implemented as part of a case management system and which are more suited to research studies.** The overall cost of tracking information on every case in a management system is usually quite high; moreover, the more complex the case management system the lower the quality of the data in it tends to be. A case management system may be well suited to recording the events in a case, such as hearings. Other proposed measures, such as the percentage of

cases in which both parents receive written service of process, may be extremely resource intensive to capture for every hearing and may be better measured through small random samples of cases taken at periodic intervals.⁵³

5. Any implementation of performance measures must take into account the courts in less-populated counties. Fifty percent of dependency courts in California had fewer than 200 dependency filings in 2003, and 25 percent had fewer than 50 filings.⁵⁴ Courts with relatively few filings experience much greater yearly variation in any given statistical indicator than do larger courts. Any system using performance measures to assess these individual courts must use statistical techniques to account for the volatility of indicators in small courts.

6. Performance measures should be considered within the context of demographic information. Reporting a set of consistent measures for all 58 superior courts in California has many advantages. However, the demographics and environments of the 58 counties are not comparable, so it is important to collect consistent data on the income, race or ethnicity, and language needs of children and families in dependency court and use those variables to conduct additional analysis of the performance measures. Many of these demographic and social variables are already collected through CWS/CMS.

7. Information beyond that proposed by the ABA needs to be collected in California's dependency courts. Issues in dependency court that are not addressed by the proposed nationwide performance measures but will have an impact on the outcomes measured include the following:

Families with multiple cases in juvenile dependency court and other court departments. Families with multiple cases can experience inefficient case processing, duplicate services, difficulty navigating the court system, and conflicting orders. The experiences of these families in dependency court may be very different from those of other

families and may have a significant impact on a court's performance measures. The CFCC's Unified Courts for Families Program Mentor Court Project is currently developing models for identifying and measuring performance outcomes for families with multiple cases.

Children who are or have been involved in delinquency proceedings. The movement of children between the dependency and delinquency systems has a major impact on both the court and the children it supervises; however, these crossover cases have never been systematically identified. The CFCC is currently working with a group of courts to quantify crossover cases and evaluate their processing.

Court interventions used in cases. Court interventions should be identified in every case. Each dependency court oversees a range of interventions for children and parents. Those working in a collaborative-court model⁵⁵ may provide a diverse set of interventions such as youth court, youth violence court, mental health court, juvenile drug court, family drug court, and other programs focused on balanced and restorative justice for families and children in both the delinquency and dependency systems. Juvenile courts may also oversee dependency mediation, a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program (available in more than one-half of California's counties), family group conferencing, and many other court-connected services. These court interventions need to be systematically identified so that their impact on court performance measures and dependency outcomes can be quantified.

CONCLUSION

Data collection and the use of statistical indicators are not deeply engrained in dependency court culture. However, given adequate resources, a statistical measurement system can be developed in California that is based on the most recent national consensus, incorporates measures of key state initiatives in unified

courts for families and dependency-delinquency crossover cases, and adjusts for the known problems of performance measures, such as accurate measurement in small courts and the imposition of burdensome data collection requirements. A well-designed system of performance measures could give the California juvenile court consistent, statewide information on its impact on the lives of the children under its jurisdiction and foster accountability to the public.

and do not seek to address the many needs of court professionals who work with families in guardianship, mental health, or family court cases.

NOTES

1. The term "juvenile dependency court," as used here, encompasses court professionals from local juvenile courts in California—including court administrators, judicial officers, court staff, and attorneys—as well as attorneys, analysts, and research staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts.
2. The National Child Welfare Resource on Legal and Judicial Issues of the American Bar Association Center on the Children and the Law provides updated information on state juvenile court projects related to data collection and automation at www.abanet.org/child/cipcatalog/home.html.
3. PEW COMM'N ON CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE, *FOSTERING THE FUTURE: SAFETY, PERMANENCE AND WELL-BEING FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE* 13 (May 18, 2004) [hereinafter *FOSTERING THE FUTURE*], *available at* <http://pew-fostercare.org/research/docs/FinalReport.pdf>.
4. CTR. ON CHILDREN & THE LAW, AM. BAR ASS'N ET AL., *BUILDING A BETTER COURT: MEASURING AND IMPROVING COURT PERFORMANCE AND JUDICIAL WORKLOAD IN CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT CASES* (David & Lucile Packard Found. 2004) [hereinafter *BUILDING A BETTER COURT*], *available at* www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/Res_CtPerS_TCPS_PackGde4-04Pub.pdf.
5. This article was developed through literature reviews and interviews with juvenile court staff and experts, followed by an analysis of court needs. First, the authors reviewed existing research to locate information gaps and ongoing juvenile court research initiatives around the country. Next, they interviewed juvenile court professionals and CFCC staff who work with California's juvenile courts to identify additional research questions and information needs. Finally, the many research questions identified through the literature review and interviews were narrowed to those most relevant to the work of the courts. The article's findings primarily relate to dependency court
6. Research projects at the AOC that failed to locate consistent data in juvenile dependency courts in California include the Caseload Study for Trial-Level Court-Appointed Dependency Counsel, Interim Report 2003; Court-Based Juvenile Dependency Mediation in California (2002); and the Court Improvement Program Reassessment (forthcoming Summer 2005).
7. NAT'L CTR. FOR STATE COURTS, *TRIAL COURT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS & MEASUREMENT SYSTEM* (2001; modified Jan. 23, 2005), *available at* www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/TCPS/Contents.htm.
8. VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE PROJECT, NAT'L COUNCIL OF JUVENILE & FAMILY COURT JUDGES, *RESOURCE GUIDELINES: IMPROVING COURT PRACTICE IN CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT CASES* (Spring 1995), *available at* www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/resguid.pdf.
9. *Id.* at 20.
10. For information on SACWIS, see www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/sacwis/about.htm.
11. Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-89, 111 Stat. 2115 (codified at scattered sections of 42 U.S.C. (2000 & Supp. 2004)).
12. For information on Child and Family Services Reviews, see www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/index.htm.
13. *BUILDING A BETTER COURT*, *supra* note 4.
14. *FOSTERING THE FUTURE*, *supra* note 3, at 17.
15. Cal. Admin. Office of the Courts, Judicial Branch Statistical Information System, accessed Mar. 2005.
16. JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CAL., 2004 COURT STATISTICS REPORT, *available at* www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/3_stats.htm.
17. COURT STATISTICS PROJECT, *STATE COURT CASELOAD STATISTICS*, 2003 (Nat'l Ctr. for State Courts 2004), *available at* www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/csp/2003_Files/2003_SCES.html.
18. BRIAN OSTROM ET AL., NAT'L CTR. FOR STATE COURTS, *EXAMINING THE WORK OF STATE COURTS*, 2003 (2003), *available at* www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/csp/2003_Files/2003_Main_Page.html.
19. *See supra* note 10.

20. *Comprehensive*, in this context, means that data collection must include child welfare services, foster-care and adoption assistance, family preservation and support services, and independent living services.

21. For information on AFCARS, see www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/dis/afcars/index.htm. The cited Web page describes AFCARS as follows: "The SACWIS functions as a 'case management' system that serves as the electronic case file for children and families served by the States' child welfare programs. One of the reports that is produced from SACWIS is the AFCARS data sent to ACF. In order to qualify for SACWIS funding, States' systems must, among other things, meet the AFCARS requirements in 45 CFR 1355.40. States that develop a SACWIS with Federal funding must not collect the AFCARS data from a separate information system once the SACWIS is operational."

22. The authors were unable to find a single source explaining the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). The best description of the system is found in *Child Maltreatment 2000*, CHILDREN'S BUREAU, U.S. DEP'T OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVS., CHILD MALTREATMENT 2000, available at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cm00/index.htm.

23. Child Welfare Outcome reports are available on the Children's Bureau Web site at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/cwo.htm.

24. CHILD MALTREATMENT 2000, *supra* note 22.

25. For more information on the National Data Analysis System, see www.cwla.org/ndas.htm.

26. California's CWS/CMS is described in detail at www.childsworld.ca.gov/ChildWelfa_355.htm.

27. Child Welfare Services (CWS/CMS) reports are available at <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/>.

28. A cohort file contains information on the subgroup of children who entered out-of-home care during a defined period—for example, the first quarter of 2003.

29. The California Juvenile Statistical Abstract, published by the Center for Families, Children & the Courts at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/resources/publications/articles.htm#juvenile, makes many of the data sources reviewed in this section accessible to court staff. The full report will be available on the above Web site in summer 2005.

30. Descriptive statistics from CWS/CMS are available at www.dss.cahwnet.gov/research/Children's_405.htm.

31. For publications from the data set, see www.chapinhall.org/home_new.asp. For more information on the data set, see FRED WULCZYN ET AL., AN UPDATE FROM THE MULTISTATE FOSTER CARE DATA ARCHIVE: FOSTER CARE DYNAMICS 1983–1998 (Chapin Hall 2000), available at www.chapinhall.org/category_editor_new.asp?L2=66.

32. AMY JANTZ ET AL., THE CONTINUING EVOLUTION OF STATE KINSHIP CARE POLICIES (Urban Inst., Dec. 2002), available at www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310597_state_kinship_care.pdf.

33. URBAN INST., *The Cost of Protecting Vulnerable Children, CARING FOR CHILDREN: FACTS AND PERSPECTIVES* (Nov. 2002), available at www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/310586_FactPerspectives.pdf.

34. FREYA SONENSTEIN ET AL., URBAN INST., STUDY OF FATHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN PERMANENCY PLANNING AND CHILD WELFARE CASEWORK (U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Aug. 2002), available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/CW-dads02/>.

35. For more information on the *Family to Family* reform initiative, see www.aecf.org/initiatives/familytofamily/.

36. For more information on *Kids Count*, see www.aecf.org/kidscount/.

37. SARAH CARNOCHAN ET AL., CHILD WELFARE AND THE COURTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TWO COMPLEX SYSTEMS (Bay Area Soc. Servs. Consortium, U.C. Berkeley, Dec. 2002), at <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/bassc/>.

38. For more information on the survey, see www.ndacan.cornell.edu/NDACAN/AboutNDACAN.html.

39. Admin. on Children, Youth & Families & Cornell Univ., National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (in progress). For information about the survey's data set, see 128.253.104.22/NDACAN/Datasets/Abstracts/DatasetAbstract_111.html.

40. BARBARA NEEDELL ET AL., CTR. FOR SOC. SERVS. RESEARCH, YOUTH EMANCIPATING FROM FOSTER CARE IN CALIFORNIA: FINDINGS USING LINKED ADMINISTRATIVE DATA (May 2002), available at <http://cssr.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/researchdetails.asp?name=youth>.

41. CAL. WELF. & INST. CODE §§ 366.21(f), 16501.1(f)(14) (West 2004).

42. HEALTH, EDUC. & HUMAN SERVS. DIV., U.S. GEN. ACCOUNTING OFFICE, FOSTER CARE: EFFECTIVENESS OF INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES UNKNOWN, PUB. NO.

NOTES GAO/HEHS-00-13 (Nov. 1999), *available at* www.gao.gov/new.items/he00013.pdf.

43. *See* www.dmh.cahwnet.gov.

44. Medi-Cal Specialty Mental Health Services Reports are available at www.dmh.ca.gov/SADA/default.asp.

45. California Department of Education reports are available at www.cde.ca.gov/ds/.

46. *See* California Department of Education Reports, *supra* note 45.

47. *See* <http://ca.rand.org/stats/education/education.html>.

48. NAT'L CTR. FOR STATE COURTS, CALIFORNIA COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT REPORT (Apr. 1997), *available at* www.abanet.org/ftp/pub/child/carpt.txt.

49. CAL. STDS. JUD. ADMIN. § 24.5.

50. *See supra* note 2. Permanency by the Numbers: Improving Dependency Caseflow Management Through Data Driven Strategies, a conference presented by the National Center for Adoption Law and Policy at Capital University Law School and the Pew Commission on Fostering Results, Oct. 2004, also provided a venue for information exchange on the development of dependency measures.

51. Information by event gives, for example, a count of the number of hearings resulting in termination of parental rights. Information by case and cohort gives, of all cases filed during a specified time period, the percentage of cases in which parental rights were terminated as of a specified date.

52. *See* BUILDING A BETTER COURT, *supra* note 4, at 20.

53. *Id.* at 53. *Building a Better Court* does not recommend the use of a case management system for collecting all performance-measure data.

54. COURT STATISTICS REPORT, *supra* note 17, at 58.3.

55. The AOC Collaborative Courts Web site, www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/collab/, defines collaborative courts.